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Farm Broadcasters Letter

United States Department of Agriculture

Office of Public Affairs

Radio-TV Division

Washington, D.C. 20250

(202) 720-4330

Letter No. 2609

May 7, 1993

FOOD FOR PROGRESS -- Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy has returned from meetings in Europe that included GATT, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. While in Brussels, Belgium, Secretary Espy announced the commodity mix contained in \$700 million for agricultural aid extended by the United States to Russia. The commodity breakdown is \$227 million for corn, \$105 million for soybean meal, \$66 million for butter, \$56 million for wheat, \$40 million for high-value products, and \$5 million for sugar. 75 percent of the commodities will be shipped on U.S. flag vessels. The United States and Russia will share the \$200 million in transportation costs. Secretary Espy said, "As President Clinton stated when announcing this package in Vancouver last month, this aid will benefit not only Russian consumers during their difficult time of economic restructuring, but also U.S. farmers and agribusinesses..." Contact: Steve Kinsella (202) 720-4623.

EXPORT PRODUCTS HIT RECORDS -- Foreign demand for certain U.S. agricultural exports have reached record highs. Recent statistics show U.S. yogurt exports continued to grow briskly in 1992, outpacing the previous year by 62 percent at \$14 million. Mexico accounts for one-half of total U.S. yogurt exports. U.S. herbal tea exports reached \$55 million, a record level. Two-thirds of herbal tea exports go to the EC. U.S. pasta exports jumped 44 percent to a new high of \$65 million. Canada is the top market, accounting for 80 percent of U.S. export pasta sales. And pistachio exports jumped 100 percent in 1992 to \$94 million. Overseas purchases now account for 40 percent of the domestic crop. Hong Kong was the leading importer at \$20 million. Contact: Diane Dolinsky (202) 690-1886.

ANTI-HUNGER LEGISLATION -- The Mickey Leland Hunger Prevention Act reforms the food stamp program to promote self sufficiency of recipients, makes food assistance more readily available to poor families with children, and enhances program integrity and savings. In testimony to the House Agriculture Committee, Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy said the legislation is an investment in the future of the nation. The bill provides incentives for education and training that would lead to decreased dependence on food stamps and other public assistance programs. The Act also includes provisions to promote savings by expending recovery efforts of food stamp overpayment and reduce street trafficking. Contact: Steve Kinsella (202) 720-4623.

WEIGHT LOSS AND BLOOD PRESSURE -- Weight reduction is effective in lowering blood pressure, and could replace the need for drugs in some mildly hypertensive patients. One in 4 Americans has high blood pressure, and many are trying to reduce sodium intake rather than lose weight. Dr. Beth Reames, Extension nutritionist with the Louisiana State University Agricultural Center, says studies show that better control of blood pressure was achieved with weight control than with sodium reduction. Reames says weight loss enhanced the effectiveness of blood pressure medications. Contact: Beth Reames (504) 388-4141.

VEGETABLE ACREAGE UP SLIGHTLY -- The 1993 annual fresh-market harvested vegetable acreage is forecast at 1.8 million acres, about one percent more than last year. Total farm value is forecast at \$6.3 to \$6.5 billion, about 2 to 6 percent higher than in 1992. Grower and retail prices for fresh-market vegetables are expected to decline. The highs experienced in April resulted from weather-related supply gaps from Florida and California, which will be filled as the spring production season gets underway. **Contact Gary Lucier (202) 219-0884.**

INDUSTRIAL USES OF AG -- In response to the growing importance of nonfood uses of agricultural crops and materials, USDA's Economic Research Service is introducing a new situation and outlook report that will examine how agricultural materials are used by industry. "Industrial Uses of Agricultural Materials" is designed for people involved in the research, development, production, processing, marketing and policy issues surrounding agriculturally based industrial products. The semiannual report will be available in July and December for \$16 a year. Call 1-800-99-6779 to subscribe. **Contact: Greg Gajewski (202) 219-0888.**

FOOD STAMP ACCURACY PROJECTS -- USDA has awarded \$370 million in federal grants to Illinois and Maryland to start pilot projects aimed at issuing food stamp benefits more accurately. The grants will assist the states in finding innovative ways of handling heavier caseloads while achieving high payment accuracy. The projects are scheduled to last 18 months. **Contact: Phil Shanholtzer (703) 305-2286.**

WHOLE LOT OF PUFFING -- U.S. smokers consumed an estimated 498 billion cigarettes last year, about 2 percent less than a year earlier, for an annual consumption per adult of 2,629 cigarettes. While domestic use declined, exports increased boosting cigarette output about 2.5 percent last year. U.S. smokers used 2.2 billion large cigars, and 1.3 billion small cigars, both down 2 percent. The fall in domestic consumption is expected to continue due to higher prices, increasing restrictions on smoking, adverse publicity, and declining social acceptance. Cigarette exports rose 15 percent to 206 billion cigarettes. The value of all tobacco exports exceeded imports by \$4.8 billion, up one percent from a year earlier and the second highest level ever achieved. **Contact: Verner Grise (202) 219-0890.**

ALTERNATIVE PEST-CONTROL METHODS -- USDA's new Pesticide Data Program shows that vegetable producers are using a variety of practices to control pests. Innovative methods include a tractor mounted sweeper to vacuum bugs off the crop, cultural methods such as crop rotation; biological methods such as releasing beneficial insects which prey on insect pests, and placing pheromone traps. These practices complement or can reduce the use of chemical pesticides. **Contact: Ann Vandeman (202) 219-0405.**

FOOLING PESTS WITH WHITEWASH -- When adult pecan weevils emerge from the soil this August and September there will be a surprise for them in many orchards. USDA scientists with the Agricultural Research Service have constructed a masonite trap shaped like a pyramid about 21 inches wide and 48 inches tall, painted brown to resemble a tree trunk. When the insects emerge from the ground they crawl or fly to the dark trunk of a pecan tree. But by whitewashing the tree trunks the costly pests are diverted to the brown-painted trap from which they cannot escape. Ten to 15 traps per 100 acres are sufficient, placed 10 feet from the tree trunk in July. The method reduces the need to spray for the insects and can serve to more accurately pinpoint outbreaks. **Contact: Louis Tedders (912) 956-5656.**

FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

AGRICULTURE USA #1874 -- Household insects driving you buggy? Brenda Curtis talks with a University of Maryland entomologist about the latest and most effective methods of controlling roaches, fleas, silverfish, and spiders. (Weekly reel -- 13-1/2 minute documentary.)

CONSUMER TIME #1356 -- Alcohol and the risk of breast cancer; flea control; new national yogurt labeling campaign; "pro-active" lawn mowing; mulching mowers. (Weekly reel of 2-1/2 to 3 minute consumer features.)

AGRITAPE NEWS & FEATURES #1866 -- USDA News Highlights; Russian aid package finalized; dairy farmer refunds; no-till caution; high-tech peaches. (Weekly reel of news features.)

NEWS FEATURE FIVE #1619 -- Alcohol & breast cancer; sugars kill flies; fungi kill pear pests; sustainable feed crop; "new" health food grain. (Weekly reel of research features.)

UPCOMING ON USDA RADIO NEWSLINE -- Friday, May 14, livestock outlook, milk production; Tuesday, May 18, former USSR outlook, weather & crop update, farm labor; Wednesday, May 19, U.S. ag outlook; Thursday, May 20, wheat outlook, U.S. trade update, catfish processing; Friday, May 21, livestock/poultry update, cattle on feed; Monday, May 24, feed outlook. These are the USDA reports we know about in advance. Our Newsline carries many stories every day which are not listed in this lineup. Please don't let the lack of a story listing keep you from calling.

USDA RADIO NEWSLINE (202) 488-8358 or 8359, COMREX ENCODED (202) 720-2545.
Material changed at 5 p.m., EDT, each working day.

FROM OUR TELEVISION SERVICE

FEATURES -- Lynn Wyvill reports on exercise and aging; Dave Luciani of Michigan State University on dry ice cream and other value-added dairy products; Joe Courson of University of Georgia Extension on a chemical cure for blueberry pollination.

ACTUALITIES -- USDA chief meteorologist Norton Strommen with a crop and weather update for U.S. farming regions, including analysis of the El Nino weather pattern; USDA economist Gary Lucier on vegetable production.

UPCOMING FEATURES -- Pat O'Leary reports on biotechnology and tomatoes; Lynn Wyvill on a Virginia Extension program to help immigrants adapt to life in the U.S.; DeBoria Janifer on the alternative food crop, purslane.

EVERY OTHER WEEK -- Agriculture Update with anchors Eric Parsons and Lori Spiczka. 4:30 of USDA farm program information in news desk format with B-roll.

Available on Satellite Galaxy 6, channel 23, audio 6.2 or 6.8, downlink frequency 4160 MHz.: Thursdays from 7:30 - 7:45 p.m., EDT, Saturdays from 10 - 10:30 a.m., EDT, and Mondays from 8 - 8:30 a.m., EDT.

OFFMIKE

COTTON FARMERS...in west Texas have had to replant so often they don't put seed in the hoppers until the third trip, says **Curt Lancaster** (VSA Radio Network, San Angelo, TX). This year its dry. East Texas is wet, but Curt notes the grass has little nutritional value. Curt says the south central NAFB meeting in San Angelo was well attended. Congratulations to Curt and **Roddy Peeples** (VSA Network), at the meeting they were both made honorary Texas agriculture commissioners by **Rick Perry**, the Texas Commissioner of Agriculture.

WE'RE WATCHING IDLE TRACTORS...says **Bob Bosold** (CANN/WAXX, Eau Claire, WI). More snow fell in April than any other time of winter, keeping the ground wet and further delaying planting. Bob's also covering the cryptosporidium outbreak in Milwaukee's water supply. Bob says it has been in the system for the last five years, but had been successfully filtered out. A filtration failure released it into the water system. Bob says there is no proof the cryptosporidium came from dairy farms, that it exists in all mammals, but agriculture took the early rap.

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A BUMPER HARD RED WHEAT CROP...is developing, says **Mike Dain** (Mid America Ag Network, Wichita, KS). Development is two to three weeks behind. Mike says there is limited disease problems at this time, but producers in western Kansas are experiencing snow mold on sections that had 50-60 inches of snow during the winter.

WE NEED WATER WINGS...says **Skip Davis** (WASK Lafayette, IN), and about 5 days of dry warm breeze. Skip says the outlook is for a normal spring. Most producers in his area can get their crop in the ground in about 10 days.

ABOVE NORMAL...precipitation for the past six months, and double the normal amount for April, has producers waiting for fields to dry out, says **Gary Digiuseppe** (KWMT, Ft. Dodge, IA). Gary says attendance was strong at the Farm Show, held last month at the Webster County fairgrounds, and the date has been set for next year's event to be held the third weekend in March.

VIC POWELL *Vic Powell*
Chief, Radio & TV Division